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GURAH,
THE LINK BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND THE EAST-JAVANESE ARTS

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The main temple: The surrounding walls emerging on the North West side. South West view.

The main stone inscriptions temple in the well. The main temple: height 28 Cm, length 48 Cm, broad 8 Cm.

GURAH,
THE LINK BETWEEN THE CENTRAL AND THE EAST-JAVANESE ARTS

by R. Soekmono

Introduction

It is well-known that in the ancient Indonesian History of Art we distinguish a Central-Javanese and an East-Javanese period. The differences marking the art and architecture of those two periods are so striking that the impression is obtained as if we have to do with two separate cultures.

It is a matter of fact, that the Central-Javanese art ceased to flourish abruptly in the beginning of the 10th century, while the East Javanese art did not come to the fore until the middle of the 13th. century. The period in between is practically a blank in Indonesian archaeology, but remarkable enough its greater part — the Kadiri-period — has a special fame as the Golden Age of the Old-Javanese literature. This fact may to a certain extent justify the actual continuity of the Indonesian art, while the gap only shows the incompleteness of the picture we have so far gained with regard to our art history.

Actually, a real gap does not exist. There certainly are archaeological evidences, but so scarce and so fragmentary that it was not easy for Krom [1]) and Stutterheim [2]) to prove the unity of the ancient Indonesian art and architecture. It is, therefore, of extreme importance, when new archaeological data can throw light on this matter.

An interesting find

Medio 1957 the Archaeological Service received a report about the find of a seated stone statue near the village of Gurah (Pare, Kediri), when people were digging a pit for a well up to a depth of more than 3

metres. Also a lot of bricks, partly broken into pieces and scattered around the statue, were dug up.

The statue proves to be a very beautiful one, and may safely be classified as a masterpiece of the hinduized Indonesian art. Its perfect shape and elaborate carvings represent the highest aesthethical values of iconoplastic art. Its serene facial expression really comes up to the requirements of religious aim for which it is meant, and its ornaments give proof of the most refined decorative art.

From the iconographical standpoint of view the statue is also very interesting. It is seated cross - legged on a semi circular lotus cushion against a plainly kept back. Its four faces, of which the one at the rear is just over the ridge of the back, immediately reminds us of the depiction of the God Brahmā. And so are the attributes, consisting of a camara and an aksamala which are held in the backhands over the back of the seat. The kundi, the form of which is quite unusual, stands freely behind the left knee. Both fore hands rest on the knees, while on the opened handpalms are to be seen lotus rosettes, which denote to the special meaning of the statue, viz. as a portrait statue of a deceased king [3]).

Stylistically, the statue reminds us very much of the beautifully shaped stone statues from Singhasari (now in the Leyden Museum in the Netherlands). The more so is the lotus cushion.

A Brahmā statue is very rare in Indonesia, and Brahmā representing a deceased king has even not been known before. So the Gurah find is certainly worth a thorough study.

The excavations.

A preliminary excavation was carried out in October and November of the same year 1957. It proved to be a very hard labour, as the site made part of a vast barren plain of mere volcanic sand and stones. One time it was extremely hot, and another time the unhindered wind drives sand and dust unmercifully over the excavators.

The hard labour, however, was well rewarded by its results. On the

spot where the Brahma statue was found were dug up the remains of a square brick structure, measuring 3.20 x 3.00 metres, the base of which stood about 5 metres under the present surface. It is a pity that of the structure only the lower part of the pedestal was left. A lot of bricks from the walls proved to have been dug out earlier, and was heaped close to the site by the finder of the statue. An examination towards these bricks did not result in anything particular, as there were no decorations or other indications whatsoever to be seen.

Starting from the spot where the statue was found, trenches were dug in several directions. The one to the East unearthed two stone blocks, the bigger one of which measured 150 x 45 x 30 cm. This one was apparently the lintel of the doorway. Close by were found the unrecognizable pieces of a broken stone statue.

The trench in southern direction proved to be more succesful. Three metres from the first structure came to light a second one, measuring 3.45 x 3.45 metres, also made of brick and also facing to the East. The pedestal was for the greater part intact, and parts of the walls were still erect, though badly damaged. Of the pedestal may be observed the Central-Javanese features of its profile by the presence of an inward bending ogive above the fillet after the plinth.

This second structure was the more interesting, as in its cella (measuring 1.90 x 1.65 m) were found three statues in situ : the bull Nandi in the centre, flanked by two deities in full ornate, seated against the left and the right wall. Similar to what is said about the Brahmā statue, these three sculptures also represent the masterpieces of the hinduized Indonesian plastic art.

A close examination of the floor yielded in the find of a pit under the Nandi. Such a pit is unusual, and the more so as it was only 30 cm wide against a length of 1.65 m., stretching along the North-South axes of the cella. As to the special meaning of this pit, nothing can be concluded. It is only obvious that nothing was found in it.

The find of a second structure led to the further excavation in southern direction, and a third brick building came to light at a distance of

about 3 metres. Of this structure only the lower part of the basement was left, measuring 3 metres square. In its cella was found a pedestal, however, without anything on it. Similar pedestals are frequently found, and mostly are simply called „yoni". The yoni found now had apparently shifted a little from its original place, since the spout was no longer directed to the North as it should be. Under the yoni was a pit, measuring 35 cm square, however, without anything found in it.

The discovery of three small chandis in a row immediately led to the conclusion that we were excavating a Çiwaitic temple-complex. It has become known, namely, that Çiwaitic compounds always follow this system that the main building is accompanied by three subtemples in a row on the opposite side. And further excavations gave the proof that the Gurah complex made no exception.

Those further excavations were carried out in 1958 and 1959.
The fullest attention was now paid to the part East of the row of subtemples, where the main structure was to be expected, completing the whole compound. The beginning was not successful, as the digging only yielded in the find of a great many bricks that were broken into pieces and scattered over several depths. Several plainly hewn stone slabs were found too, one of which measured 185 x 40 x 32 cm. Some slabs were even found in connection with each other, but still the main temple did not appear yet!

At the southern end of one of the North-South trenches came suddenly to light a row of bolders, making thus the impression as to be the lowest layer of the foundation of a wall. This row of bolders was followed by excavating along its course, both in eastern as well as in western direction. It proved that it was to be followed up to a length of 30.50 metres, while at both ends the row of bolders went on northwards at right angles to the former course. It was a pity that the northern corners could not be unearthed, as the excavations struck the cart-track of the village. Even though, the obvious conclusion was that we had to do with the last humble remains of the enclosuring wall of the temple-court. This assumption was strengthened by the fact that at the western side, opposing the space between the middle and the southern sub-temple, the row was broader up to a length of 5.30 m., which

might indicate that this part was meant as the foundation of the gateway. However, a peculiarity in the stratigraphy could not support, and even would reject, the above assumption. The row of bolders, if it was the base of the foundation of the wall, proved namely to be situated 2½ metres higher than the ground level on which the subtemples stood!

On the other hand, the provisionally assumed enclosuring wall gave some idea with regard to the approximate extent of the site to be excavated, while the stratigraphical difficulty led to a deeper digging.

This deeper digging was now concentrated at the central part of the site, where the main structure was to be expected. And, really, at a depth of nearly 4 metres appeared a brick wall in a ruinous condition, which proved to be one of the sidewalls of the temple-foot, and which was soon followed by the emergence of its southeast corner. Digging hence in Western direction, the southern side of the temple-foot proved to be no longer traceable after a length of nearly 9 metres. Its base ran further, but disappeared into the sub-soil water. The eastern side wall of the temple-foot was only traceable up to a few metres from the southeast corner, and ended abruptly to disappear into the subsoil water.

At the western side, however, a projecting part came to light, and excavations yielded in the discovery of the entrance to the main building. A few steps of the staircase were found in situ, flanked by railings. Unearthing the lower part of the staircase, a great surprise awaited us. The railings proved to end in „makaras", while gargoyle figures are peculiar to the Central Javanese art! And as if to ban all doubts immediately, more stress was laid on this peculiarity by the presence of parrot figures in the open mouths of the gargoyles!

Unearthing now the floor of the newly found main structure, it proved soon that it had thoroughly been broken open earlier. The find of a rusty muttock and the scattered broken pieces of apparently a stone statue were evident indications that the temple had been wilfully destroyed, possibly by treasure hunters. Even though, the search after the temple depot was carried on thoroughly as soon as the temple-pit was found. This part of the excavation was not an easy task, as the pit was full of water, which could not be drained by lack of a water pump and

by the rush of the subsoil water. So the examination took place by diving and in spite of all difficulties the following were brought to light : a broken square stone slab that apparently had served as the lid of the pit, the mutilated head of a stone statue (judging from the size possibly the main statue that once throned in the cella as the main object of worship), pieces of earthen ware, an inscribed brick which later on proved

to be of extreme importance, and finally — at the very bottom of the pit, 2½ metres under the surface of the subsoil water — the empty stone casket which once contained the relics.

The location of the entrance to the sanctuary and the find of the temple-pit, which must be situated at the centre of the floor, facilitated a great deal the further search after the extent of the main temple. Soon was the whole basement unearthed, indeed. It measured 1,43 x 11,43 m², but at the same time it became also evident that the temple had been enlarged ! The original basement, with an own profile, measured 9.50 x 9.50 m². So the additional wall was about 2 metres thick. It is a pity that of the building only the basement was left, so that nothing can be said about the higher parts, but it is not too bold a surmise to assume that the enlargement part emboitement had taken place in its entirety. Only the structure for the gateway underwent no alteration, as far as it was evident from the basement which was kept original.

While unearthing the North-east corner of the main temple, a brick wall of 1 metre thickness and 0.72 m height came to light, running North-South. The obvious conclusion was, of course, that the enclosuring wall was found. This proved to be true, as simultaneous excavations unearthed its South-west and South-east corners.

In these corners awaited us a great surprise, as there were found small brick structures, measuring 1.85 x 1.85 m² and rising nearly one metre above the ground-level. Both structures were heavily damaged, but it was clear that they were treated like small shrines, standing on pedestals and provided with an entrance into an inner space. In this inner space of the eastern structure was found a lingga which was planted in a shaft in the floor.

Those small structures at the corners immediately reminded us of si-

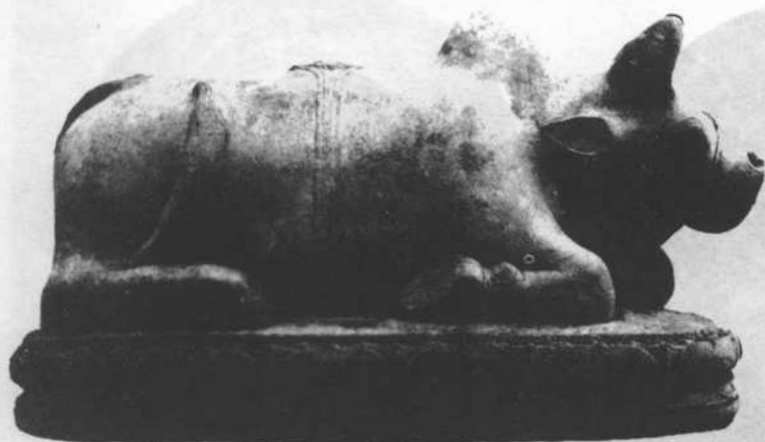
Brahma statue
Height 76 Width 50 Broad 42 cm
Frontal view

Frontal left side view

Back side view

Seating statue (heading North) from Tjandi Perwara 2 Compound. Height 77 Width 50 Broad 40 cm. Frontal view

Right side view

Seating statue
(heading South)
from Tjandi Perwara 2 Compound
Height 80 Width 50 Broad 40 cm
Frontal view

Right side view

Nandi statue
from Tjandi Perwara 2 Compound
(photo P. no. 2575)
Right side view

milar ones at the Lara Djonggrang compound at Prambanan,' where they serve as magical markations of the cardinal points of the courtyard. Led by this idea a further search after again other such structures was carried out. And, really, just in between the two shrines earlier found emerged a third one, measuring 1.85 x 1.85 x 1.90 metres. The inner space was found empty. Part of the enclosuring wall was also found, running from East to West.

Following the western side of the enclosuring wall in northern direction, the humble remains of the gateway was unearthed. It was situated just behind the space between the middle and the southern subtemples, and its groundplan measured 3.30 x 3.60 metres. Three steps of the staircase were intact, leading to a doorway of 0.85 m.

North of the gateway emerged one other small shrine of the same type as the three ones along the southern side of the enclosuring wall, and a fifth one was unearthed at the eastern side of the courtyard, behind the main chandi where the further course of the enclosuring wall was traceable too.

The positions of the shrines with respect to each other enabled us now to locate the three remaining ones along the northern side of the enclosuring wall. This part of the site proved to be not excavated yet, as a cart track ran over it.

After some negotiations with the village administrators the cart track was diverted, and the excavations were carried out with success. The northern wall was found, and also the three shrines at its ends and its middle. Only one shrine, the eastern one, missed its lingga.

The courtyard with its enclosuring wall was entirely brought to light now, measuring 30 metres square, and this meant that the excavations were completed. It was only a pity that the search after the ninth shrine, the one in the centre of the courtyard, was in vain. No remains, whatsoever, were traceable.

The finishing touch of this most exciting excavation was the closing of the huge pond of more than 30 metres square and 5 metres deep.

It was too dangerous for the traffic and the village population, and therefore unaccountable for the Archaeological Survey, to leave it, in spite of the great pity with regard to the archaeological remains that were unearthed after such hard a labour !

Observing the results

a. Structure and statue

The excavations at Gurah yielded in revealing a Çiwaitic temple-compound of brick construction, consisting of four-structures which were all found in a deplorable and completely ruined condition. There also came to light a number of stone statues, which were, peculiar enough, sound and well preserved.

The more peculiar it becomes when a closer examination shows that this controversy is also valid with regard to the styles of the structures and of the statues.

Let us first take into consideration the statues, consisting of three deities and one nandi. All of them show one and the same style, which at the very outset remind us of the beautiful sculptures of Singhasari (represented by the Prajñaparamita now in the Leyden Museum) Some details of the deities are even undeniable to this Singhasari art, such as : the hair curls, falling down alongside the shoulders, the abundantly ornamented necklace and girdle, the special kind of loop of the cloth at the side of the hips, and the treatment of the lotus cushions. Concerning the nandi may be put forward that its ornamented girdle and the fillet around its snout are also peculiarities until then found in the Singhasari art only.

From the above considerations it would only be justified to classify the Gurah sculptures as to belong to the Singhasari style. This assumption is not more than logical, in view of the fact that the Kadiri region did not come to the fore in history until the advanced East-Javanese period.

The same cannot be said, however, with regard to the structures themselves. The presence of an ogive in the most complete profile of the pedestal of the middle subtemple, and the makara at the ends of the

staircase of the main temple, denote undisputably the Central-Javanese period. Those two features beside several others are namely only found in the Central-Javanese art, and totally absent in the East-Javanese art.

As we know, in the Indonesian ancient history of art we distinguish a Central-Javanese period that came to an end abruptly in the first decades of the 10th century, and an East-Javanese period that started since the middle of the 10th century. Peculiar enough, however, the art and architecture of the East-Javanese period did not come to the fore before the middle of the 13th century. The greater part of this „archaeological blank" is filled in by the so-called Kadiri period (early 11th to early 13th century), a period that on the other hand has a special fame as the Golden Age of Old-Javanese literature.

Between the Central-Javanese art and the East-Javanese one there are so many striking differences that the impression is made as if there are two separate cultures.

And this impression is the more justified as the archaeological hiatus blurs the eventual traces of a normal development from Central to East-Java. Actually, an absolute gap does not exist. There certainly are archaeological evidences, but so scarce and so fragmentary that it was not easy for Krom as well as for Stutterheim to prove the unity of the „mutilated" Indonesian art.

It is, therefore, of extreme importance when new archaeological data can throw light on this problem. And it is in this respect that the Gurah finds draw special attention. Could the fact that the sculptures belong to the far advanced East-Javanese style while the structures denote to the Central-Javanese architecture justify the newly excavated temple complex in the period just in between, i.e. the Kadiri period, thus filling in the gap that separates the two periods?

The contradictory facts with regard to the style of the statues and the architectural details of the structures would lightly lead us to the obvious assumption that they are no products of the same period. It is not impossible, indeed, that the statues might adorn a temple complex of an earlier period, though such a case is not known from other temples.

On the other hand, a detailed examination of the main temple showed that it had been rebuilt and enlarged. So it is quite well possible that the statues do not belong to the older temples but to the ones built later on. However, the staircase with the makaras belong to the enlarged temple, while no traces whatsoever were found with regard to the existence of other and older statues. It would, therefore, be too bold a surmise to assume that the statues are not belonging to the same period as the temples are.

In facing those contradictory facts we are very lucky to have found the inscribed brick in the temple-pit. Actually the inscription only reads „pavāgāta" (?), and as the meaning of which is obscure while any other indication is not available it is at first sight of no help. However, from the palaeographical point of view it proves to be able to give an approximate dating. The characters used are only comparable with those of the inscriptions of the 11th — 12th centuries, and are therefore to be classified as belonging to this period as well. And this is exactly the period that is neither Central-Javanese nor East-Javanese (from the point of view of Indonesian art history).

b. Compound and pantheon

The Gurah compound consists of a main temple, facing to the west, and three subtemples standing in a row opposite it with entrances at the eastern side. It goes without saying that the main building is the abode of the highest deity, i.e. Çiwa, one time in the shape of Mahādewa and another time only represented by his lingga. It is only a pity that the main statue was broken into hundreds of pieces, so that nothing can be said about it.

Concerning the subtemples, it must be noted first that in most cases only the bases or still less, the foundations, are left, and that the statues have disappeared. As far as it is traceable, however, the middle subtemple always houses Çiwa's wāhana, the bull Nandin, while the other two subtemples are possibly meant for one or another manifestation of Çiwa.

At Gurah we find that the middle sub-temple is meant for Nandi. He is, however, flanked by two deities which are practically alike. Differ-

ences are only found with regard to the positions of the hands and of the kind of the glories behind their heads. The one to the left of the Nandi, facing to the South, has its left hand on the left knee and his right one on the lap, while a crescent moon is visible between his neck and the nimbus. The other one, to the right of the Nandi and facing to the North, has both hands opened on both knees, while a double nimbus is visible behind his head.

From those peculiarities, we are inclined to determine the first deity as Chandra and the second one as Sûrya. This determination reminds us of the Lara-Djonggrang complex at Prambanan, where also statues of Chandra and Sûrya were found in the middle subtemple of Nandi, but which afterwards had been removed as no certainty was available with regard to their original placing.

The subtemple on the left (seen from the main temple) contains a yoni. This is also the case with other compounds like Gunung Wukir and Modjogedang, but in again other compounds are found linggas (Badut and Idjo). As a yoni is after all nothing else but a pedestal, mostly for a lingga and in some cases for Çiwa, while at the Prambanan-complex the left sub-temple contained a Çiwa standing on a yoni, we now can conclude that the left sub-temple of Gurah was indeed meant for Çiwa or his lingga.

Taking now the right subtemple into consideration, it proves that in all the earlier known compounds no indications whatever are left, except at the Merak-complex. Here is found a Mahāyogi, or better perhaps, an Agastya, seated on the throne and flanked by two attendants in añjalimudrā. As we know, it is in this right subtemple that the Brahmā statue was found. Though it is premature to draw any conclusions now, the question does arise whether this Brahmā statue is indeed meant as representing the God Brahmā or another deity. The matter is that Brahmā as a member of the Trimûrti is too prominent a deity to be housed in a subtemple, while no other case can give any support to this supposition. This desecration must certainly be felt at Prambanan, where necessarily three main temples were erected for the three members of the Trimūrti.

In view of those objections and of the facts that presumably the subtemples are intended for the lower manifestations or other aspects of Çiwa Mahādewa, it is not too bold a guess to see the Brahmā statue of Gurah as one or another manifestation of Çiwa too. If this be true, it is possibly justified to pull together Gurah and Merak, and thus to identify the Brahmā statue with Agastya.

c. Court-yard and cardinal points

Another point of interest found at Gurah is the markation of the cardinal points of the court-yard. For this aim special small cubical structures were built of brick, enclosing stone linggas.

Prior to this discovery loose linggas were also found in the courtyard of several chandis, but all of them were put aside and further on neglected. It was not until such a markation was observed at the Lara Djonggrang-complex that excavators were aware of the significance of the so-called pseudo-linggas. And since then special attention was paid to such „queer finds" when digging.

The actual significance of this way of markation still awaits a special study, but one thing is certain, viz. that by that system stress is laid on the sacredness of the courtyard rather than of the structures themselves. This fact is the more obvious when we take into consideration the center of the courtyard, i.e. the meeting point of the crossing axes and of the diagonals of the court-yard. It proves that this center does not coincide with that of the main building. We can even say that just because of this magical center the main structure must be shifted to a certain direction. As far as it is traceable, the shift takes place backwards and to the left simultaneously, so that the magical center is situated in the corner that is formed by the front side of the main temple and the right side of its staircase towards the entrance.

Another indication of the importance of the courtyard rather than of the structures we find in the well-known fact that so many chandis have been enlarged or rebuilt. Chandi Kalasan is a good example of rebuilding : the one that is erect now is actually the 3 rd building, while parts of the second and the first ones are still present inside it. It is certainly not because of economical considerations that people did not

erect new chandis instead of transforming old ones! From the Nāgarakertāgama and archaeological data we know that Chandi Palah or Panataran was in use for more than four centuries, and that it underwent alterations and rebuildings for several times. Even after Islam had changed that Indonesian view of life, the sacredness of ancient sites were preserved, and most of the mosques and grave-yards were especially established on such places, i.e. on places that were considered as sacred before.

The main temple: The rest surrounding walls emerging on the North West side. North West view.

Notes :

1) **Dr.N.J.Krom** : Inleiding tot de Hindoe Javaansche Kunst.
Deel II - 1923
Page 460*ff*.........

2) **W.F.Stutterheim** : Oudjavaansche Kunst.
Bijdragen tot de Taal-, en Volkenkunde
Deel 79 - 1923.
Page 323*ff*...........

3) **J.L.Moens** : Een Boddhapratista.
Tijdschrift voor Indische Taal-, Land
En Volkenkunde Uitgegeven door het
Bataviaasche Genootsche van Kunsten
en Wetenschappen.
Deel 60 - 1921
Page 78*ff*............

Patok temple South East view after complete escavating in order of research. West side view.